THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Thomas S. Foley
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

It is my pleasure to transmit to the Congress the Surgeon General's report on the health consequences of smoking entitled Preventing Tobacco Use Among Young People. This report is mandated by section 8(a) of the Public Health Cigarette Smoking Act of 1969 (Public Law 91-222) and includes the health effects of smokeless tobacco products as mandated by section 8(a) of the Comprehensive Smokeless Tobacco Health Education Act of 1986 (Public Law 99-252). The report was prepared by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Office on Smoking and Health.

This report focuses on the vulnerable adolescent ages of 10 through 18 when most users start smoking, chewing, or dipping and become addicted to tobacco. It examines the health effects of early smoking and smokeless tobacco use, the reasons that young men and women begin using tobacco, the extent to which they use it, and efforts to prevent tobacco use by young people.

Smoking kills 434,000 Americans each year. Adolescent smoking and smokeless tobacco use are the first steps in this totally preventable public health tragedy. The facts are simple: one out of three adolescents in the United States is using tobacco by age 18, adolescent users become adult users, and few people begin to use tobacco after age 18. Preventing young people from starting to use tobacco is the key to reducing the death and disease caused by tobacco use. This report documents that intervention programs targeting the broad social environment of adolescents are both effective and warranted.

A great opportunity lies before us to prevent millions of premature deaths and improve the quality of lives. This report points out the overwhelming need in public health for efforts directed toward stopping young people before they start using tobacco.

Sincerely,

Donna E. Shalala

Enclosure

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